

# Family Support Programs

It takes more than great medicine to heal a child. Family Support Programs including Child Life and Social Work bring comfort, joy and empowerment to children and families.



Child Life Specialist Kayla Sadowski with Evelyn Ginley, Middletown, Ind.

## THE NEED

### Child Life

Child Life Specialists serve as “comfort experts” who ease children’s fears.

- Children who receive Child Life services experience far less fear, anxiety, pain and emotional distress.
- Riley’s 24 Child Life Specialists provide services including medical education, procedural support, pain management, therapeutic play and Pet Therapy.
- 80 percent of funding for Child Life Specialists at Riley comes from Riley Children’s Foundation donors.

### Social Work

Riley Social Workers help families solve problems and remove “roadblocks” affecting many aspects of their lives so they can focus on helping their child heal.

- No two families are alike. Social Workers assess and address each family’s unique psychosocial and economic needs.
- Social Workers help parents learn to advocate for their children in a complex medical environment.
- 80 percent of funding for Riley’s Social Work team comes from Riley Children’s Foundation donors.

## THE IMPACT

Through all the ups and downs of treatment, families know that they can count on Family Support Programs to ease their burdens. The result is optimal, family-centered care that leads to better outcomes—not just physical recovery, but mental and spiritual wholeness. This approach ensures that kids at Riley feel like children first, and patients second.

Being in a hospital is one of the least normal experiences a child can have. Riley recognizes the importance of providing comfort and normalcy. “Forgetting for just a little bit that they are in the hospital—that’s a big part of how Child Life normalizes the hospital setting,” says Melissa Sexton, Riley Child Life Specialist and Special Events Coordinator.

Your support will ensure that staffing for these critical programs can be maintained at a level that meets the needs of Riley families. Transformational gifts could increase Family Support Program staffing levels to provide families with even greater access to these services.

# CASE STUDY



Social Worker Stephanie Shook with Yaritza Ramirez, Indianapolis

Riley Hospital's Social Workers can be described in many ways. They are problem solvers, peacemakers, support beams and crisis managers the "glue" that helps families stay strong as their child faces a health challenge.

Social Worker Caitlin Scanlon says she considers her role a great honor. "It is so special to hear families' stories," she says. "They let us in at such a vulnerable time in their life. When we can be a source of solace and a safe haven among chaos and challenging moments, it is very rewarding."

Emergency Department Social Worker Jenn Benson says she will never forget the time when she held a child who was alone and in a lot of pain, helping her get much-needed sleep. "To be able to provide that kind of comfort and love to a child who was hurting was wonderful," she says. "I knew I was making an impact. We could not do what we do without those of you who donate. There aren't enough 'thanks' in the world to express what your gifts mean to me."

## CONCLUSION

Although the importance of Family Support Programs is well-documented, these services are not covered by insurance and rely upon donor support. "I think the biggest message to donors is that they are directly impacting patient care," explains Riley Child Life Specialist Abigail Rainey, who is also a former Riley patient. "Every time I see a patient succeed or feel empowered by a Child Life interaction I think, 'I am so thankful that donors get this, and want to make this happen for the patients at Riley.'"

# INVESTMENT

The Aaron Michael Willard Fund will be used to help families of critically ill children take care of emergency needs such as lodging, transportation and meals. This type of support will help families maintain physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness as their child heals.

This fund will be sustained by private donations in addition to proceeds from the sale of the "Once Upon a Goldendoodle" book series.



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Indiana's only hospital nationally ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*.

**TOP-8**  
**children's hospital for federal research funding**

Source: *Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research*

